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Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 04092 172238Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------172244Z 049610 /75-62
P 170838Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3938

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 4092

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, KS, US
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT PARK MEETING WITH CALTEX PRESIDENT VOSS.

1. AT COURTESY CALL MAY 17 BY KOREA-US ECONOMIC COUNCIL AND CALTEX PRESIDENT JAMES VOSS, PRESIDENT PARK PROLONGED MEETING TO URGE GREATER UNDERSTANDING IN US OF HIS DOMESTIC POLITICAL POLICIES. AFTER QUESTIONING VOSS ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO PRC AND STATE OF US ECONOMY, PARK WELCOMED US INVESTMENT AS HE HAS IN THE PAST, PARTICULARLY IN HEAVY INDUSTRY AND PETRO-CHEMICALS. HE STRESSED THAT A SOUND DEVELOPING ECONOMY WAS KEY TO DEFENSE SELF-RELIANCE REQUIRED BY US GROUND FORCES WITHDRAWAL AND URGED GREATER US INVESTMENT WHICH HE SAID WOULD BE GIVEN FAVORED TREATMENT.

2. THEN, QUITE UNEXPECTEDLY, PARK LAUNCHED INTO A VIGOROUS DEFENSE OF HIS INTERNAL POLICIES AGAINST CRITICISM IN US PRESS AND CONGRESS. VOSS HAD ONLY TOUCHED VERY LIGHTLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, NOT NORMALLY SUFFICIENT GROUNDS FOR PARK TO RISE TO HIS OWN DEFENSE. PARK'S POSITION FOLLOWED USUAL LINES. BUT, THERE WERE SEVERAL POINTS NOT PRE-VIOUSLY MADE. FIRST, HE ATTACKED "DOUBLE STANDARD" IN WHICH CONGRESSMEN AND OTHERS ARE CRITICIZED FOR GOING TO KOREA AND TALKING WITH ROKG AUTHORITIES WHILE THERE IS NO CRITICISM IN US PRESS OF AMERICAN VISITING VIETNAM, A FORMER CONFIDENTIAL

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ENEMY. SECOND, AND OF POTENTIALLY FAR GREATER SIGNIFICANCE, WAS STATEMENT TWICE MADE THAT THERE HAD TO BE EFFORTS BY US AND REPEAT AND ROKG TO RECTIFY MISUNDERSTANDING IN US.

3. COMMENT: BOTH VOSS AND I WERE STRUCK BY DEFENSIVE TONE TAKEN BY PARK SINCE HE COULD HAVE EASILY ESCHEWED HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE DURING HIS MEETING WITH VOSS. REFERENCE TO EFFORTS BY

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BOTH US AND ROKG TO RECTIFY MISUNDERSTANDING IN US IS FIRST TIME I CAN RECALL HIS WILLINGNESS TO RECOGNIZE PROBLEM REQUIRES ANY ACTION ON PART ROKG. I INCIDENTALLY CHIMED IN ON THIS POINT.

4. WE HAVE IN PAST FEW DAYS GOTTEN SEVERAL HINTS FROM AMBASSADOR HAHM AND SOURCES CLOSE TO BLUE HOUSE THAT PARK MAY INDEED BE CONSIDERING OR AT LEAST PREPARED TO CONSIDER SCENARIO INVOLVING RELEASE OF KIM DAE JUNG AND SOME FORM OF RECIPROCAL ACTION BY US WHICH WOULD MAKE CLEAR RELEASE NOT RESULT OF US PRESSURE AND THEREFORE NOT APPEAR IN KIM'S EYES AS INVITATION TO INITIATE WITH US PROTECTION BROADER EFFORTS AGAINST PARK ADMINISTRATION. THESE HINTS MUST AT THIS STAGE BE TREATED WITH SOME SKEPTICISM AND COULD WELL REPRESENT HOPES OF THOSE AROUND PARK WHO WOULD WISH CONCESSIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. NEVERTHELESS, PARK'S OWN REFERENCE TO MUTUAL EFFORTS COULD INDICATE NOT ONLY ACUTE AWARENESS OF PROBLEMS HE FACES IN THE US BUT CONSIDERATION OF SCENARIO PERMITTING CONCESSION TO OUR VIEWS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
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Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, MEETINGS, FOREIGN INVESTMENTS
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Sent Date: 17-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977SEOUL04092
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770175-0677
Format: TEL
From: SEOUL
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770548/aaaabpkd.tel
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Litigation History:
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2485269
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT PARK MEETING WITH CALTEX PRESIDENT VOSS.
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, EINV, KS, US, (VOSS, JAMES), (PARK CONG-HUI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/38723d92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009